

Message Text

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ACTION AID-59

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INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

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SUBJECT: COMMENTS ON MAURITANIA FOOD SALES REPORT

REF: (A) NOUAKCHOTT 877, (B) NOUAKCHOTT 777, (C) STATE 84203

1. WHILE THE NOTE AND TABLE TRANSMITTED REFTEL ARE LARGELY SELF-EXPLANATORY, CERTAIN SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION AND COMMENTS ARE NECESSARY.

2. WE HAVE CONFIRMED WITH FED THAT, AS NOTE STATES IN PARA 6, FED PROVIDED TRANSPORTATION COST ASSISTANCE IN THEIR 1973 AND 1974 FISCAL YEARS ONLY.

3. THE TOTAL COST OF THE OPERATION TO THE MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT CITED IN PARA 7 OF NOTE IS OF COURSE 883 MILLION ONLY IN THE SENSE THAT THIS AMOUNT WAS PAID OUT BY THE GIRM. ITS NONREIMBURSED COST WAS APPROXIMATELY 200 MILLION UM.

4. PAGE 29 OF THE IGA REPORT, WHICH APPARENTLY SERVED AS THE BASIS FOR CONGRESSMAN ASPIN'S PRESS RELEASE, STATES THAT AN ESTIMATED 5.2 MILLION DOLLARS WAS RECEIVED FROM VARIOUS DONORS
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AND SALES, NOT THE US ALONE AS PARA 8 OF NOTE INDI-

CATES. HOWEVER, THE IGA REPORT IS IN ERROR IN THAT IT CITES FRANCE AS A DONOR FOR TRANSPORT COSTS. THE FRENCH MISSION INFORMS US THAT IT DID NOT CONTRIBUTE FUNDS FOR SUCH COSTS AT ANY TIME. MOREOVER, THE IGA REPORT DOES NOT MENTION THAT THE USG DID MAKE FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR SUCH COSTS, EVEN THOUGH THE USAID RECORDS SHOWING SUCH CONTRIBUTIONS WERE MADE AVAILABLE TO THE INSPECTORS.

5. AGAIN CONCERNING PAGE 29 OF THE IGA REPORT, A FALSE ANALOGY IS MADE IN THE PARAGRAPH CONCERNING THE CHAD ET AL SALES PROGRAM. AT NO TIME HAS ANYONE ALLEGED THAT 90 PERCENT OF THE MAURITANIAN GRAIN WAS SOLD, AS DONE IN THE CHADPROGRAM, AND IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN KNOWN THAT THE 3 UM SALES PRICE USED IN MAURITANIA WAS SIMPLY A TOKEN PRICE. CONSEQUENTLY, TO INFER THAT MAURITANIA SALES SHOULD ALSO HAVE PRODUCED REVENUES WELL ABOVE COSTS IS TO COMPARE APPLES AND ORANGES.

6. REGARDING PARA 10 OF NOTE, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT WHILE AS STATED THE MAURITANIAN AUTHORITIES MAY HAVE BEEN REFUSING TO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO THE INSPECTORS ASKED, REQUESTS BY USAID FOR SIMILAR DATA BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER THE INSPECTORS' VISIT WERE EITHER UNANSWERED OR ANSWERED INCOMPLETELY. HOWEVER, THE GIRM STATEMENT THAT THE INSPECTORS MADE NO CONTACT WITH COMPETENT AUTHORITIES IS ESSENTIALLY CORRECT. THE ONLY KNOWN CONTACTS INSPECTORS MADE WITH GIRM OFFICIALS WERE THOSE MADE BY INSPECTOR VAN HOUTEN WHO TALKED WITH GIRM LOCAL OFFICIALS DURING A RURAL AREAS FIELD TRIP ON WHICH HE ACCOMPANIED AN AID FFP END-USE CHECKER CARRYING OUT HIS NORMAL BUSINESS. WE KNOW OF NO CONTACTS MADE BY INSPECTOR GALLIVAN WITH GIRM OFFICIALS, ALTHOUGH THE FACILITIES OF THE US MISSION FOR ARRANGING SUCH CONTACTS WERE AT HIS DISPOSAL.

7. IT COULD BE ARGUED THAT CERTAIN COSTS CITED IN THE GIRM TABLES WOULD HAVE HAD TO BE PAID AS NORMAL EXPENDITURES ANYWAY, SUCH AS ALL PERSONNEL AND ADMINISTRATION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS, AND THUS SHOULD NOT BE COUNTED AS TRANSPORTATION RELATED. EXCLUDING THESE ITEMS, THE TOTAL FOR REPAIRS, VEHICLE PURCHASE, CONTRACT TRANSPORT, AND LIGHTERAGE STILL TOTAL SOME 700 MILLION UM AS AGAINST RECEIPTS OF SOME 587 MILLION. THUS EVEN ON THIS MORE RESTRICTIVE BASIS A SUBSTANTIAL DEFICIT STILL EXISTS. MOREOVER, PORTIONS OF THE EXCLUDED ITEMS, SUCH AS ADDITIONAL WAREHOUSING, ARE CERTAINLY

CHARGEABLE TO THE FOOD OPERATION.

8. CONSEQUENTLY WE BELIEVE THAT THESE TABLES DEMONSTRATE CLEARLY THAT MAURITANIA DID NOT PROFIT FROM THE FOOD OPERATION. MOREOVER, THE TABLES DEMONSTRATE THAT THE LACK OF TIME AND PERSONAL APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN THE PRINCIPAL FACTOR CAUSING THE GIRM'S EARLIER LIMITED REPORTING. THE PRELIMINARY AUDIT ON WHICH THESE TABLES ARE BASED REQUIRED THE FULL-TIME EFFORTS OF THREE OFFICIALS AND THE PART-TIME ASSISTANCE OF A NUMBER OF SPECIALISTS OVER A PERIOD OF TWO-THREE WEEKS.HANDYSIDE

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